

Chief, Planning and Review Staff

31 August 1954

Chief, Services Division

Use of US Equivalents for Foreign Measurements in Intelligence Production

REFERENCE: DD/I Notice 50-100-2 of 19 August 1954

The following suggestions and recommendations are in response to the need for use of US equivalents for foreign measurements.

1. Obviously, it is of definite value, in the case of physical measurements, to follow any foreign terms with its equivalent in standard US term. In this case, however, it will be necessary to make an explicit statement concerning the US term to be used. For example, one Chinese Shih Mou can be expressed as 0.1647 acres, or as 6,500 square feet, or as 722 square yards. However, a strict adherence to this order may result in many references and parenthetical remarks to the detriment of both brevity and clarity.


2. In the case of conversion of kilometers to miles, no difficulties are anticipated. However, to convert rubles per metric ton-kilometer to dollars per short ton mile will be confusing and laborious. It should be mentioned that we do not have a precise internal value of the ruble in dollars. Even the more simple conversions are not conducive of clarity. Example: "In 1953, the USSR transported 1,121,000,000 metric tons (1,235, 342,000 short tons) an average distance of 748 kilometers (464.78 miles) for a total ton-kilometer performance of 840 billion (575.3 billion short ton miles)." It would be more simple to prepare a conversion table for each factor and attach it to each product. Better still, have the tables printed and made as part of the outline issued 4 June 1954 by Chief, Economic Research entitled, "Comments on the Organization and Preparation of Economic Intelligence Reports".

3. In the case of economic measurements, this system seems filled with methodological difficulties. Equivalent values would have to be established and made easily available. Periodic changes occur, and this will subtract from its value for comparison or analytical purposes.

4. It is suggested, together with this need as noted in the DD/I Notice, there be an equally conscientious effort to see that wherever difficult-to-render foreign terms are presented in English, a transliteration of the original term follow in parenthesis or in footnote.

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5. Finally, it is recommended that the problem of satisfactorily resolving what measurements should receive parenthetical treatment be undertaken initially in St/PB and possibly in D/A.

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